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SUBJECT: REACTIONS TO ERICQ PIERRE'S NOMINATION AS PRIME MINISTER

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 607  
[¶](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 424

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[¶](#)1. (C) Prime Minister-designate Ericq Pierre has begun reaching out to parliament to enhance his chances of confirmation. Public and private reactions to Ericq Pierre's nomination as Prime Minister have been mixed. His approval by the Parliament is likely but not certain. The focus of political parties and parliamentarians has already shifted to the PM-designate's policies and Cabinet. Objections to Pierre focus on his long time spent outside of Haiti, his career as a technocrat, his perceived closeness to international financial institutions and their "neo-liberal" policies, and his closeness to President Preval. Support for Pierre stems from the wish to support the President and from the desire to get a government in place quickly. Pierre must first be approved as Prime Minister by Parliament, then form a cabinet, and finally submit his full government and its general policy declaration to the parliament for confirmation. If confirmed, Pierre will have the challenging task of grappling with the formidable economic problems spotlighted by the April rioting, while balancing conflicting laundry lists of demands from parliamentarians, political parties, the private sector and others.

Support for Ratification in Parliament, Political Parties

[¶](#)2. (C) Prime Minister-designate Ericq Pierre began reaching out to major parliamentary groupings the week of April 28. He met with Senators in the "Group of 16" (the group that ousted PM Alexis April 12), and in the Chamber of Deputies, the Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP) and the "Group of 60." These parliamentary blocs and the major political parties have indicated they have no fundamental objection to Pierre. MINUSTAH Chief of Parliamentary Affairs

Jean-Philippe Laberge predicted to Poloff on April 29 that Pierre would pass the ratification process in Parliament. Pierre already has the support of the Presidents of both houses, as well as most Lespwa senators and deputies. Opinions within the two major informal blocs in the Chamber of Deputies are more mixed, with some deputies expressing suspicion that Pierre's long association with international financial institutions makes him a ''neo liberal,'' and questioning whether he satisfied the constitutional requirement of having lived five years consecutively in Haiti. The de facto leaders of the Senate's ''Group of 16,''' Senators Youri Latortue (Artibonite in Action, Artibonite) and Rudy Herivaux (Fanmi Lavalas, West), who both led the charge to oust former PM Alexis, told MINUSTAH their bloc would not oppose Pierre as Prime Minister.

¶3. (C) Lespwa Steering Committee member Anes Lubin informed Poloff April 29 that Lespwa has not released an official position on Pierre, but opined that the Lespwa platform would support the President's choice in the hope that Pierre would prove himself equal to the job. Patrick Domond (Lespwa, Jacmel/Southeast) told Poloff April 29 that the CPP has no objection to the person of Ericq Pierre. They are more interested in his general policy platform, and in the composition of his cabinet and how he selects his ministers. Domond confirmed that the CPP would watch out for ''neo-liberal'' policies, which they strongly oppose, in Pierre's general platform.

¶4. (C) Fusion spokesperson Micha Gaillard told Poloff April 29 that the Fusion leadership council accepts Pierre's nomination. Fusion hopes the new PM will use the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Document de Strategie Nationale pour la Croissance et la Reduction de la Pauvreté - DSNCRP, see ref B) as the basis for a general platform.  
(Note: Gaillard expressed consternation that Fusion first

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heard about Pierre's selection on the radio, not directly from the Presidency, diminishing their confidence in Preval's determination to form an inclusive government. End note.) Fusion parliamentarians, however, will set down several conditions for confirming the new PM, which focus on the composition and political platform of Pierre's to-be-formed government.

¶5. (C) Prominent businessman Reginald Boulos commented to Ambassador April 29 that Pierre's lack of ties to any political party were a positive attribute. Boulos believed Pierre will tell Preval what he really thinks, though he noted that Pierre will still ''follow orders'' from Preval. Fanmis Lavalas Senator Rudy Herivaux told PolCouns May 2 that Senate approval of Pierre was very likely but that the Chamber of Deputies was more difficult and less predictable. Pierre still had spadework to do there, Herivaux thought, and he must also reach out directly to the political parties.

Some see Pierre as out-of-touch, ''neo-liberal'' Technocrat

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¶6. (C) Objections to Pierre center on four themes: his many years spent outside of Haiti; his reputation as a technocrat; his long association with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and its ''neo-liberal policies''; and his close personal ties to President Preval. Fanmi Lavalas deputies (ref A) noted that, having lived outside Haiti since 1980, Pierre is too far removed from Haitian reality to be an effective unifier. Deputy Jean Beauvois Dorsonne (Artibonite in Action, Verrettes/Artibonite) told the media Pierre was ''not the man for the moment,'' because he was more of a technocrat than a leader. Boulos's comments show that some Haitians interpret Pierre's closeness to Preval as a sign he will be Preval's lackey. Several parliamentarians have cautioned against the new government continuing ''neo-liberal'' policies - a concept never precisely defined in current political discourse in Haiti - but say they will

hold their criticism until they see Pierre's general platform and Cabinet.

Comment

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¶7. (C) Pierre's chances in the Senate are good but less certain in the Chamber of Deputies, the more unruly of the two houses of Parliament. Thus far, Pierre has not evoked passionate support or opposition, at least in terms of his character and qualifications. His policy predilections are not known. If ratified, Pierre will have to address concerns he is too far removed from Haitian reality, too beholden to Preval, and too inclined to continue policies of macroeconomic stabilization at the expense of broad popular welfare. Increasing numbers of parliamentarians, including Senate President Kely Bastien, now apply the epithet "neo-liberal" to the economic polices of ex-PM Alexis, which they blame for allowing inflation and hunger to get out of control. To address these concerns, he will probably base his political platform on the DSNCRP -- an economic and development blueprint with broad support in the GOH, the private sector (including among important bankers), and is seen as a product of Haitian thinking -- despite the involvement of the IMF and World Bank in its creation. Pierre could conceivably stumble in trying to satisfy constitutional requirements that he be a Haitian citizen "by origin" (which requires proving citizenship back to one's grandparents), owning property in Haiti, and having lived in Haiti for the last five years. (Note: he might get around the last requirement by arguing that his long sojourn in Washington, D.C. as a representative of Haiti to an international organization, the IDB. End note)

¶8. (C) Comment continued: Two issues that could make Pierre's second parliamentary confirmation vote, in which he presents his cabinet and program, more hotly contested than the first vote, for the PM alone. First, political parties' demands for inclusion in the government will play out in the cabinet selection process. Looking back on Preval's consultations in selecting the PM, some parties are not

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particularly hopeful their demands will be met. Fanmi Lavalas, for one, still feels President Preval snubbed them in this process. Even parties who felt they were consulted adequately in the PM search learned of Preval's final choice through the media. Second, a strong undercurrent in the parliament, particularly the lower chamber, is the focus on reelection and on getting a piece of the budget pie for their districts. The PM is not well positioned to satisfy such pork-barrel interests. Parliamentarians and political parties will try to secure these interests by obtaining appointments of allies in key ministries, such as Finance, Public Works and Agriculture. Putting together the new cabinet will likely be a more conflictual process than selecting the PM-designate was.

TIGHE